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ABSTRACT

These guidelines were developed as part of Maine's statewide project for inclusive schools, Project LEARNS (Local Education for All in Regular Neighborhood Schools). The model proposes that students with severe disabilities be provided with a range of services and supports within regular classes rather than with a continuum of placements. The guidelines briefly address: (1) commitment to inclusion, (2) commitment to adequate and appropriate planning for inclusive schools, and (3) commitment to provision of improved educational and related services. (DB)

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GUIDELINES FOR INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

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LEARNS
University of Maine
Maine Department of Education

LEARNS

(Local Education for All in Regular Neighborhood Schools)

Guidelines For Inclusive Schools

Introduction

LEARNS is a cooperative effort of the Maine Department of Education, Division of Special Education, the University of Maine, Center for Community Inclusion, Maine's University Affiliated Program, and the College of Education and participating schools whose purpose is to promote, assist and support the development of inclusive schools for all Maine students. LEARNS believes that ALL students benefit from education that values and practices the recognition and support of diversity. All students can be successful, grow and learn in regular schools and classrooms when individually designed supports are provided.

LEARNS has developed this set of guidelines for use by school units interested in the development of inclusive schools. They have been designed after review and analysis of model inclusion efforts in the United States and Canada including efforts here in Maine. The goal of inclusive schools is to create educational environments where all students, including those with

disabilities are integral and fully participating members of their local schools. This includes students with severe disabilities and other students who have traditionally been served in alternative classrooms, settings and programs. The LEARNS model of inclusive schools proposes that a range of services and supports rather than a continuum of placements be available to meet the individual needs of students.

These guidelines build on school department policies, values and beliefs that:

- all children belong to their communities
- no child is too difficult to educate in their community school if a team with a common vision comes together for planning
- all children have gifts to offer their school and community
- all problems have many solutions
- parent and community involvement is vital
- each child has the capacity to have and to be a friend

Interested districts work towards the goal of inclusive schools through participation in an evolutionary process which includes a review of the system's goals and a commitment to restructuring.

The guidelines that follow are meant to support this effort.

GUIDELINES

1. *Commitment To Inclusion*

A school demonstrates its commitment to inclusion through the development of policies, procedures and practices that ensure that all students are embraced and supported as integral members of the school community.

1. All students attend school with their brothers and sisters, friends and neighbors.

2. All students attend school on the same days and during the same hours.

3. Where possible extended school year programs are designed to provide continued opportunity for inclusion with typical peers.

4. All students are transported on regular buses (or, all buses, including accessible buses, transport students with and without disabilities).

5. Building level administrators develop and support a School Inclusion Team in each school.

6. School administrators provide support for and encourage ongoing collaboration of parents, teachers, administrators and other school and community members.

7. Release time and support are provided to ensure that teachers, related services staff, support staff, and administrators can access staff development opportunities.

8. Awareness and informational activities are provided to parents and families regarding inclusive schools.

9. All students receive their educational programs in regular classes. When appropriate, the curriculum is modified or adapted to reflect the goals and objectives of IEPs.

10. All students are encouraged to participate in all school related activities, including after-school and extracurricular activities.

11. "People first" language is used.

II. Commitment To Adequately And Appropriately Plan For Inclusive Schools

A school demonstrates its commitment to adequately plan for inclusive schools through the development of policies, procedures and practices that ensure that all students receive the support and services require to be successful in their local school.

1. Building-level School Inclusion Teams (SIT) are developed and meet regularly in order to identify and assist in the provision of supports necessary to allow students with to be welcomed, participating members of the school community. Teams may be comprised of:
    a.) teachers
    b.) administrators
    c.) parents
    d.) support services staff
    e.) peers and classmates
    f.) school board members

2. An individual student/family-centered planning process is utilized to plan the educational program and the IEP for each student with disabilities. This process incorporates the Pupil Evaluation Team and may include other school personnel and classmates. The purpose of this planning process is to:
    a.) share a brief history of the student

    b.) share insights into the student by

describing his/her personality, strengths, likes and dislikes

c.) determine, based on the above information, what the student needs

d.) categorize these needs into goal or curriculum areas

e.) identify goals and objectives

f.) design a daily and weekly schedule for the student

g.) identify the student planning team who will be responsible for implementation

3. The student planning teams identified through the planning process meet on a regularly scheduled basis to share instructional strategies, modify curriculum and problem solve when issues of implementation arise using a collaborative teaming process. Principles of shared leadership, expertise and resources ensure that each student's needs will be appropriately planned for and met cooperatively.

4. The development of friendships between students will be facilitated through the provision of activities that promote the understanding and acceptance of diversity and the individual gifts each student brings to share with the school community. The use of a Circle of Friends is encouraged.

III. Commitment To Provide Improved Educational And Related Services

A school demonstrates its commitment to provide improved educational and related services through the development of policies, procedures and practices that ensure that all students receive their educational and, when appropriate, related services in regular classes with the support they require to be successful.

1. All students are assigned to the regular classroom appropriate to their age. The classroom teacher receives, when appropriate, consultation and support from the special educator and/or other related services staff based on the needs identified on an IEP.

2. The human and materials resources of regular and special educators and related services staff are shared to meet the instructional and program needs of students. The contributions of all are shared using a collaborative teaming model.

3. Related services are available to students with disabilities in the regular class directly by the therapist(s) or through consultation and as needs are reflected on an IEP.

4. A functional (individually meaningful) and community-referenced curriculum is utilized.

5. An array of instructional techniques that benefit

all students are utilized and may include:

a. cooperative learning strategies
b. team teaching
c. integrated curriculum
d. peer tutoring/peer support programs

6. Each student participates in the regular curriculum, to the extent appropriate, and modifications/adaptations are designed in consultation with the support team and as reflected on an IEP.

7. Objectives in the areas of critical function (communication, mobility, socialization, object use and choice making) are embedded in the activities of each student. The Maine Common Core of Learning (Reasoning and Problem Solving; Communication; The Human Record; and, Personal and Global Stewardship) is an excellent mechanism by which to incorporate the areas of critical function into the curriculum and goal areas are designed for all students.

8. Futures planning and coordination of the transitional needs of all adolescent students is addressed in the educational program designed for each student.

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